

NASA Ames STRAD DRFP
Solicitation #NNA07198991R-ACA
Questions Set 1

1. Reference Table on Page L-5 in DRFP. Under Volume I, Mission Suitability Proposal, there is an entry (#4) for a Small Business Utilization Plan. Please confirm that a Small Business Utilization Plan is indeed required for this solicitation.

The Small Business Utilization Plan will not be required for this acquisition. This reference will be deleted from the Final RFP.

2. Reference Table on Page L-3 of the DRFP. The table states that there are no page limits for the Total Compensation Plan or Key Personnel (resumes). However, both of these entries are part of the Mission Suitability Volume. Please confirm if the Total Compensation Plan and/or Key Personnel Resumes do or do not count towards the overall 130 page limit of the written Mission Suitability materials.

The Total Compensation Plan and Key Personnel Resumes do not count toward the overall 130 page limit of Mission Suitability materials.

3. Reference Page L-18 of the DRFP. The last bullet on this page requires that offerors identify CBAs with their companies. Does the current contract have represented employees? If so, will you provide the current CBA(s) in the Final RFP?

There are no Collective Bargaining Agreements for the current contract.

4. A. Reference first paragraph of DRFP Page L-16, where offerors are asked to list ... "relevant Government and Industry contracts ..." and reference DRFP Page L-20 (Section B – Past Performance Questionnaires). The instructions under paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) are unclear.

The instructions are for two different documents. On Page L-16 (Provision L.9 (b) Section A, the instructions are for Volume II of the Offeror's proposal. On Page L-20 (Provision L.9 (b) Section B, the instructions are for the Past Performance Questionnaires.

B. It appears from these paragraphs that NASA contracts are "higher value" from an evaluation standpoint than non-NASA contracts, regardless of contract scope. Is this perception correct?

NASA contracts will not have a "higher value" than non-NASA contracts. The evaluation will be performed on all referenced contracts whose value will be determined by their relevance and performance as reflected in Section M.

C. Also, paragraph (3) requires offerors to submit at least two non-NASA Federal Government contracts and two commercial contracts. How would an offeror that has no relevant commercial contracts respond to this requirement?

An offeror with no relevant commercial contracts will be assessed using what contracts they do have. If an offeror has no relevant contracts at all, they will be assessed as neutral.

5. What is the current percentage of Computational vs Experimental requirements?

Approximately 60/40

6. What is the current 'split' of requirements between TSA and TSM?

Approximately 50/50

7. Is work planned in the Nanotechnology area? Will proposal (Statement of Work) responses be required for:

- Gene Sequencing
- Quantum Computing
- Radiology

As stated in Provision M.2(c)(1)a: "The Offeror's proposal will be evaluated on how well it demonstrates its comprehension of each of the requirements of the SOW and specifically addresses how the work will be accomplished." The SOW will be reviewed prior to release of the final RFP and will be revised as needed.

8. Is there a Space Technology Division website? Where can it be accessed?

The websites are:

<http://thermo-physics.arc.nasa.gov> (TSF Branch, arc jet information);

<http://asm.arc.nasa.gov> (TSM Branch)

9. We understand that some of the incumbent's employees have been converted to civil servants. Are any of these new civil servants involved in the source evaluation process?

All personnel included in the evaluation process are checked to ensure they have no conflict of interest. All evaluations are performed as stated in Section M of the solicitation. These actions are taken to ensure there is impartiality and integrity in the process and that there is no unfair competitive advantage.

10. The Request for Proposal letter, under "Current Contract Information," indicates that there are currently 75 personnel working at an estimated annual cost of \$4 million. However, under the section entitled "Information Specifically Related to this Acquisition" the maximum value of the contract is listed at \$40 million for 5 years. Attachment J.1 Estimated Staffing Matrix, shows the total level of effort to be approximately 76 full time equivalents (FTEs).

From our calculations, the average annual total cost per FTE in the current contract is approximately \$53,000 and the estimated cost per FTE in the new contract is \$105,000. Can you please explain the discrepancy and confirm that the numbers in the RFP are correct?

The maximum value of the IDIQ Contract will be reviewed prior to posting the final RFP. The staffing matrix in the final RFP will be an estimate of the required labor.

11. In the draft RFP, on page L-5 it indicates that the cover letter in Volume III should include a list of names of the presenters for the oral presentation (no more than 5). Then on page L-7 it states the maximum number of presenters attending the oral presentation will be 3. Can you please explain the difference/discrepancy?

The maximum numbers of presenters is correct on page L-7 of the DRFP. Page L-5 will be corrected in the final RFP.

12. Highlights – Current Contract Information

“Contract NNA04BC25C provides on-site multidisciplinary engineering research and development for the Space Technology Division (Code TS) at ARC over a four-year period of performance with a staff of about 75...” 129112-DRAFT-001-006 indicates a total of 76 FTE including the program management office. The Highlights continue “...at a total estimated cost of \$4 million per year.” and Section B.2(2) indicates “...maximum amount of supplies or services that may be ordered for the potential 5 year period of the contract is \$40,000,000.00” or a maximum of \$8 million per year. In our experience, \$4 to \$8 million per year is inadequate to fund 76 FTE so the funding would appear to conflict with the staffing level indicated. We suggest that one or the other be adjusted (i.e., \$40,000,000.00 increased or 76 FTE decreased) to bring the two values into agreement.

See answer to question 10 above.

13. Highlights – 1.b

“The Government envisions that approximately 6 task orders may be authorized within the first 90 days of the contract...” would imply that significant workload changes are contemplated immediately after the 1 month Phase-in effort. Please clarify what is planned.

There are currently, 6 task orders on the contract. There are no significant workload changes anticipated immediately after award.

14. L.5(b)

“...using not smaller than Arial 12 point type.” Research has shown that serif fonts are generally easier to read than sans serif fonts for general text applications. May we use a serif font (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond) for the text with a sans serif font (e.g., Arial) for figures and tables?

Serif fonts may be used as long as they do not appear smaller than Arial 12 point type.

15. L.5(e): “The first countable 150 pages of Volume I and II...” implies that the separate page counts of 130 and 20 pages may be adjusted by the bidder so long as the limit of 150 total pages is met. Is this a correct interpretation?

No. There may be no more than 130 pages in Volume I and no more than 20 pages in Volume II. This will be clarified in the final RFP.

16. L.7(b)(1) Vol. I, Mission Suitability Proposal and Section L.9(a) Mission suitability Proposal (Volume I)
The table in L.7(b) indicates that Key Personnel and Total Compensation are to be discussed under “2. Management approach” with “3. Safety & Health Plan” and “4. Small Business Utilization” also to be provided in Volume I. The table in L.9(a) indicates that “2. Management approach” should include “a. Organizational Structure and Partnering Approach, b. Staffing, Recruitment, Retention and Training, c. Key Positions and Key Personnel, d. Total Compensation Plan, e. Phase-In Plan” Please clarify the Government’s intent.

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

17. L.7(b)(2) The list of required information includes material not usually included in the cover letter (e.g., fifth bullet “A Standard Form 33”, sixth bullet (A completed Section B)). We recommend this list be modified to show specific places where the material is to be provided.

This material is to be provided with the cover letter.

18. L.7(b)(5): “Each volume shall contain a more detailed table of contents to delineate the subparagraphs within that volume.” This will require a voluminous table of contents. We suggest that the direction be modified to “Each volume shall contain a more detailed table of contents to delineate the subsections within that volume.” or that the requirement be eliminated.

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

19. L.7(b)(6): “...or IBM-PC compatible format, compatible with Microsoft Office 2000 software...” The Microsoft Windows architecture and Microsoft Office software suite define fonts and drawing objects based on locally installed printers rather than absolute characteristics with the result that the look and feel of a single document is likely to change when viewed on different computers. This can be confusing and, in extreme cases, result in an appearance that is not representative of that intended. May we submit integrated text and graphics proposal information (i.e., Volumes I and II) in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (i.e., x.pdf) with financial data in native Microsoft Excel format (i.e., x.xls)?

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

20. L.7(b)(6): “...or IBM-PC compatible format, compatible with Microsoft Office 2000 software...” The Microsoft Office software suite has also been published as the 2003 and 2007 versions and saving to earlier formats can result in both reduced functionality and changes in document look and feel. May we submit integrated text and graphics proposal information (i.e., Volumes I and II) in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (i.e., x.pdf) with financial data in native Microsoft Excel format (i.e., x.xls)?

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

21. L.9(a)(1)(b): Does the Government prefer that the “level of management oversight needed” be defined as part of the direct charge to the task (i.e., working supervisor) or as part of a separate management task order.

The referenced section is the description of the technical sample task and calls for an estimate of the total cost to accomplish the work, including the required management oversight. The charging of management oversight for actual tasks under the STRAD contract will be based on the individual Contractor's organizational structure.

22. L.9(b)8.A.4: “The following chart is used to capture past performance information similar in technical requirements...” refers to a table the headings of which are so specific to this procurement that few, if any, contractors who are not the incumbent will be able to show relevant technical work. Since it is likely that the successful bidder will capture a large percentage of the staff currently performing the contract, we suggest that the reference sentence and table be deleted from the RFP or replaced with one identifying more generic engineering and scientific work (e.g., computational fluid dynamics, test plan development and execution, materials science). Such a change is particularly appropriate given the contracts management requirements.

This will be clarified in the final RFP. Relevant contracts may include those that were not in these specific technical areas but were examples of management of efforts similar in size and complexity to the STRAD contract. The referenced chart is used to further clarify how many of those past contracts were, in fact, in the related technical areas, but is not meant to limit the scope of past performance reporting.

23. J.1(a)4: “* Date to be completed at time of award or by subsequent modification.” would appear in conflict with L.5(a) “Safety and Health Plan – No limit”, L.6, and L.9(a)(3) “The Offeror shall submit a detailed written safety and health plan.” We suggest that the asterisk at item 4 be deleted.

This will be clarified in the final RFP. Section J will include in the contract the date of the plan, not necessarily the due date of the proposal.

24. L.2: “The Government contemplates award of a TBD Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract resulting from this solicitation.” Our experience has been that incentive fee contracts encourage improved cost control, technical performance, and service delivery by relating the fee to the contractor's performance. Incentive contracts that include reasonable and attainable targets tightly coupled to appropriate incentive arrangements motivate contractor efforts and discourage contractor inefficiency and waste. We recommend revising this sentence to “The Government contemplates award of a single Cost Plus Incentive Fee (CPIF) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract resulting from this solicitation.”

The contract type will be clarified in the final RFP.

25. L.9(a)(1)a: We suggest deleting the last sub-bullet in the first bullet, i.e., “gene sequencing, radiobiology, quantum computing” based on the information presented at the bidders’ conference.

This will be clarified in the final RFP. Bullet will be changed to “quantum computing and prebiotic geochemistry mechanisms.”

26. SOW 3.2.3: We suggest deleting this section because it is not included in SOW Section 2.1 Scope and based on the information presented at the bidders’ conference.

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

27. L.9(a)(2)(a)(ii) and (iii): Multiple bullets in these sections imply a moderate to large number of relatively small, tightly focused task orders; comments at the bidders’ conference implied a small number of very general task orders. The most effective management practices are different for the two cases. Please provide general guidance on the number of task orders to be expected under the contract (e.g., 1 to 5 per year, 6 to 15 per year, 16 to 25 per year)

See answer to question 13 above.

28. J.1 Schedule D: Responding to this instruction requires specific knowledge of the planned workload which will not be available during the proposal phase. We request that either the required workload information be specified or Schedule D be eliminated from the RFP.

This schedule is only for those subcontracts for \$500,000.00 or more.

29. L.9(a)(2)e: Sixth bullet “Availability of a benefits specialist for the duration of phase-in during office hours (9:00 am – 5:00 pm Pacific Time).” implies that incumbent recruiting may take place during normal working hours. May we base our Phase-in Plan on incumbent interaction during the normal workday and on-site at Ames?

The Government is not implying that incumbent recruiting may take place during normal working hours. Access to a benefits specialist can be beneficial to new employees working for the Offeror.

30. L.9(a)(2)e: Seventh bullet “...plans to employ non-US citizens who will be on-site personnel...” implies that some incumbent employees may be non-US citizens but non-incumbent offerors have no insight into either how many such incumbent employees may exist what positions they currently hold, or their qualifications for that work. Please make this information available.

This is a general requirement if the contractor plans to hire non-US citizens, regardless of incumbency on current contract.

31. May the written response contain information not included in the oral response charts?

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

32. L.9(b)(7): This is an indeterminate requirement that we cannot respond to as part of the proposal as written. We suggest that it be deleted.

This paragraph is not for an offeror to respond to, but notification to the offeror that the government reserves the right to obtain additional past performance information.

33. M.2(e)(2): "The Government will evaluate the realism of each offeror's proposed costs to ensure the offeror understands the magnitude and complexity of the effort." Details of the existing and anticipated task orders are required for the offeror to make in-house estimates of the required staffing. If the staffing level is defined by the Government (129112-DRAFT-001-006), the offeror's staffing estimates are not relevant. We recommend that either the task order data be provided or the realism test be eliminated.

A Cost Realism Analysis is required by FAR and the NASA FAR Supplement. As stated in L.9(c)(6)b, offerors are to use attachment J.1(b)(1) in preparing the cost proposal, explaining any proposed differences from the information provided.

34. J.1(a)6: The IT Security Plan is not listed as part of the proposal or as part of the Phase-in effort in L.9(a)(2)(e). We recommend adding it to the work required during Phase-in.

The IT Security Plan is required by Section I, Clause 1852.204-76, Security Requirements for Unclassified Information Technology Resources. This clause will be in full text in the final RFP.

35. J.1(a)7: The OCI Mitigation Plan is not listed as part of the proposal or as part of the Phase-in effort in L.9(a)(2)(e). We recommend adding it to the non-page counted section of the proposal and reflecting the requirement in Section L.

The requirement is included in the H.2(e)(2). This will be clarified in the final RFP.

36. H.3(b): The information to be provided to the contractor does not include the period of performance which, in turn, is a significant factor in staffing and cost. We recommend adding the period of performance to the task ordering procedure.

Proposal responses shall be prepared in accordance with Section L of the solicitation. As stated in L.9(c)(6)b, offerors are to use attachment J.1(b)(1) in preparing the cost proposal, explaining any proposed differences from the information provided.

37. H.3(h): "In the event of a conflict between the requirements of the task order and the Contractor's approved task plan, the task order shall prevail." The task ordering procedure does not include a task plan approval process. In addition, the approved task plan would represent the common agreement between the parties as to the scope and cost of the work. We recommend deleting this item.

In accordance with H.3(d), the contracting officer will issue a task order based upon negotiation of the contractors task plan.

38. H.4: "List here the personnel and/ or facilities considered essential..." The facilities are the property of the Government. Please clarify the expected contractor response.

As stated, list the Key Personnel considered essential to the work being performed under this contract.

39. H.8: How is the employee's time devoted to the DART program compensated (i.e., direct charge or contractor overhead)?

This is dependent upon the contractor's policy/disclosure statement.

40. G.7(b)(1)(iv): "Contractor use of Government property at an off-site location and off-site subcontractor use..." implies an off-site office. Will an off-site facility be required or will the Government provide all facility space for the technical and contract management staff? If an off-site facility is required, what functions will be required to be housed there?

An off-site office is not required for this contract.

41. SOW 2.1: "...and other functions, which may include fabrication and fabrication support..." could include fabrication work at the contractor facility. Will any contractor-furnished fabrication facilities be required? If so, for what functions?

No. All required fabrication will be performed in on-site facilities.

42. 129112-DRAFT-001-006 (Estimated Staffing Matrix)
Please provide position descriptions (i.e., minimum education, experience, special skills/certifications) for the "Skill Level Definitions" in the Estimated Staffing matrix table.

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

43. Unique, NASA-developed software codes (e.g., FIAT, Traj, Traj.CGI) are used to perform STRAD work. Please provide users guides for any packages needed or desirable to support the SOW response or sample tasks.

Specific knowledge of the use of the codes is not required in the SOW response. The RFP will include a short description of the function of each of the codes.

44. Please resolve the apparent discrepancies reflected below:

- a. SOW 2.2 (page 3) states “Research office and laboratory space, computer hardware, and software, deemed necessary for the direct fulfillment of the task orders will be provided by the Government.”
- b. Section C.1 states “the contractor shall furnish all personnel, services, equipment, material, and facilities and...for...the performance of the requirements...”
- c. Section G.6 states “The contractor shall provide all property required for the performance of this contract.”
- d. Section G.7(c) states “The following property and services are provided (checked ones)
 - i. Office space, work area space, and utilities
 - ii. Office furniture
 - iii. Property listed in...Equipment list
- e. The technical sample task states “ARC will supply...computer resources...” and “The computational resources include local terminals, personal computers, high performance workstations, and licenses for commercial software and use of Government ‘off-the-shelf’ software.”

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

45. The Draft SOW Section 3.2.3 (Nanotechnology) includes subsections for (1) Gene Sequencing, (2) Radiobiology, and (3) Quantum Computing. It is our understanding from comments made at Industry Day that:

1. The STRAD contractor’s only responsibilities related to the Nanotechnology Branch would be administrative support activities
2. There will be no work in the areas of Gene Sequencing and Radiobiology, and very limited responsibilities in Quantum Computing
3. The STRAD contractor’s technical areas of emphasis would be dedicated the Reacting Flows Environment Branch and the Thermal Materials and Systems Branch, with the exception of the administrative support to the Nanotechnology Branch.

Is our understanding correct? If so, will Section 3.2.3 be amended to reflect this position?

See answer to question 25 above. This will be clarified in the final RFP.

46. Question Related to the use of the terms “Technical Area” and Technology Area in DRFP Sections L&M:

Reference DRFP Page L-10, Section L, first two bullets under the “Technical Plan” heading:

- “ • The Offeror shall address how the broad spectrum of **technical areas** of the SOW will be...”
- “ • The Offeror’s submission shall be complete, balanced, and consistent, and shall clearly demonstrate an understanding of all the **technical areas** ...”

Reference DRFP Page M-5, Section M, first bullet under the “Technical Plan” heading:

- “• How the broad spectrum of technical areas of the SOW will be managed in a coherent, integrated manner that will meet each of the requirements defined in the Statement of Work, specifically addressing the requirements of each of the **Technology Areas**.”

The STRAD Draft SOW (on Page 1 of 8) explicitly defines “technical areas” as:

- a) chemistry and physics of hypersonic, chemically reacting, and radiating flows
- b) aerothermodynamic analysis of reentering spacecraft
- c) development and modification of computational fluid dynamics tools and their development
- d) aeronautics and space vehicle trajectory analysis
- e) materials science of ablative, reusable and multi-functional thermal protection materials
- f) experiment planning, execution, and analysis for high-enthalpy testing of materials and real-gas phenomena

The term “**Technology Area**” is not in the SOW.

Please clarify if:

- You use the terms “**technical area**” and “**Technology Area**” interchangeably, or
- “**Technology Area**” refers to Reacting Flow Environments and Thermal Protection Materials and Systems or
- There is some other interpretation.

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

47. In the STRAD Draft RFP (RFP#NNA07198991R-AC) Section L (2), 4th bullet, last item on the page (Page #L-5), it states the following related to the Oral Management Section:

"Due to badging requirements, all presenters must be U.S. citizens."

Can you please confirm that this phrase can be interpreted as follows:

"Due to badging requirements, all presenters who do not already have a valid NASA badge must be U.S. citizens."

This will be clarified in the final RFP.

48. Reference table on Page L-3, Section L.5 Proposal Page Limitations (a) Written Subfactors #2:

Although shown as "no limit," it is unclear as to whether the Key Personnel and the Total Compensation Plan have no page limit *within* the 130-page limitation of the Technical and Management approach, or have *no page limit at all*. Please provide clarification.

See answer to question 2 above.

49. In the STRAD Draft RFP (RFP#NNA07198991R-AC) Section L.7 (b) (6), the draft RFP requests "one electronic copy of each volume shall be submitted in Apple Macintosh or IBM PC compatible format, compatible with Microsoft Office 2000 software (Word, Excell and or Powerpoint).."

Are users of this electronic document comfortable using MS Word's Master Document format? Is it acceptable to submit our electronic proposal response in an MS Word Master Document format to mitigate some of the performance issues Word has with very long, single-file documents?

Also, would you approve of us submitting a pdf back-up copy of the submission to address any unfamiliarity reviewers might have using MS Word's Master Document file?

This will be clarified in the final RFP.